

# Hate speech in online reactions to news articles in Cyprus and Greece<sup>1</sup>

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## ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Ένα από τα κεντρικά θέματα στις συζητήσεις που αφορούν στο λόγο μίσους είναι ο βαθμός στον οποίο το κριτήριο της ρητής παρακίνησης σε βία και ενθάρρυνσης των διακρίσεων είναι ικανό να οριοθετήσει όλες τις περιπτώσεις που εμπίπτουν στο αντίστοιχο νομικό πλαίσιο. Το χρηματοδοτούμενο από την Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση έργο C.O.N.T.A.C.T., μέσα από την ανάλυση σχολίων από αναγνώστες διαδικτυακών πυλών ειδησεογραφίας σε άρθρα για το μεταναστευτικό και την κοινότητα ΛΟΑΤΚΙ, συμπέρανε πως και η έμμεση επιδοκιμασία των διακρίσεων φέρει συχνά συγκρίσιμα αποτελέσματα με το υπό δίωξη λεκτικό μίσος. Στο ίδιο πλαίσιο, η παρούσα μελέτη παραθέτει τα αποτελέσματα της ανωτέρω έρευνας σε Ελλάδα και Κύπρο, συγκρίνοντας την ύπαρξη ξενοφοβικών και ομοφοβικών τάσεων στα δεδομένα που αναλύθηκαν και εξετάζοντας, χρησιμοποιώντας μεθόδους ποιοτικής ανάλυσης, τη χρήση μεταφορών, υποτιμητικών εκφράσεων, σαρκασμών και την επικοινωνία στερεοτύπων σχετικά με τις μειονότητες υπό συζήτηση. Με βάση την παρούσα ανάλυση, επισημαίνεται η έκδηλη παρουσία ξενοφοβικών τάσεων στα ελληνικά σχόλια σε σχέση με τα σχόλια από Κύπρο, και η αναστροφή αυτής της τάσης στο πλαίσιο της ομοφοβίας, με τα κυπριακά σχόλια να επικοινωνούν μια οριακά μεγαλύτερη εχθρικότητα όσον αφορά την κοινότητα ΛΟΑΤΚΙ. Παράλληλα, υπογραμμίζεται η έμμεση επικοινωνία ξενοφοβικών και ομοφοβικών απόψεων, όπως αυτή προέκυψε και στα αντίστοιχα σώματα κειμένων άλλων ευρωπαϊκών χωρών, και γίνεται σύντομη αναφορά σε σχόλια που θα μπορούσαν να θεωρηθούν ακόμα και υπό δίωξη με βάση το κριτήριο παρακίνησης σε βία.

**Λέξεις Κλειδιά:** κριτική ανάλυση λόγου, ρητορική μίσους, διαδικτυακά σχόλια, Ελλάδα και Κύπρος

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Several recent events, such the ongoing migration crisis in the Mediterranean or the legalisation of same sex civil unions across a number of western countries, have brought to the global limelight discussions surrounding the notion of hate speech and the extent to which it should be regulated by law. A central issue affecting these discussions seems to be the elusiveness of the very notion of hate speech itself, which lacks a harmonised definition across different discursive settings. This is true even in its prototypical legal setting, since different countries have varying thresholds for what actually constitutes prosecutable hate speech (cf. Boromisza-Habashi 2013, Brown 2015). In addition to this, even if one takes on board the simplified view that some piece of discourse legally qualifies as hate speech if it incites to violence and discrimination towards some identifiable minority group (cf. Brown 2015), the very existence of hate speech laws in the first place can be seen to have affected the ways in which people opt to communicate discriminatory attitudes, often concealing them behind seemingly harmless statements. Yet, as the long tradition of research on discriminatory discourse within the field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) reveals (cf. van Dijk 1987, 1991; Reisigl and Wodak 2001; Baker et al. 2008; Khosravinik 2010; Kopytowska 2015; Musolff 2017), even such camouflaged messages could be taken to contribute to the maintenance

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<sup>1</sup> This research on which this paper reports is based on the work carried out for the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project, which was co-funded by the Rights, Equality & Citizenship Programme of the European Commission Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (JUST/2014/RRAC/AG) and coordinated by the University of Cyprus (Fabienne Baider). We would like to thank all partners in the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project for the fruitful discussions, and especially Sharon Millar for her significant input in the development of the methodology that was used for this study. Of course, our deepest gratitude goes to the annotators of the Cypriot and Greek data, for their careful and painstaking work.

and strengthening of minority-oriented discriminatory attitudes and, by extension, lead to hate crime too.

Against this background, the research carried under the auspices of the recently concluded EU-funded C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project (cf. Assimakopoulos et al. 2017), which included an investigation of how online comments that are posted in reaction to articles in local news portals can help reveal the commenters' attitudes toward migrant and LGBTIQ minorities across multiple EU countries, showed that even the indirect communication of a negative attitude towards a minority can lead to discrimination and prospectively also violence against minorities. Indeed, most of the comments that were classified as discriminatory in our data communicated discriminatory dispositions in a covert way, often resorting to multiple indirect discursive strategies to this effect. This, alongside the fact that researchers of language and ideology do not have any legal jurisdiction to flag a statement as hate speech, it was concluded by the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. consortium that it is, at least for the purposes of scholarly CDA work, safer to distinguish between *hard hate speech*, which would comprise talk that is prohibited in line with a particular country's relevant legislation, and *soft hate speech*, which might not, at face value, appear to be prosecutable, but still raises serious concerns in terms of intolerance and discrimination.

This paper, which contrasts some of the results obtained for Cyprus<sup>2</sup> and Greece within the same project, aims to provide further support for the claim that even indirectly expressed discriminatory attitudes are a form of hate speech that should be taken into account when tackling the issue. To this end, we will start off by outlining the methodological approach taken by the teams that annotated the collected data in for each country, before presenting a quantitative analysis of the results obtained through this process. Then, after situating the trends revealed by the quantitative analysis within the socio-historical context of Cyprus and Greece, we will turn to qualitatively evaluate a sample of the analysed comments that showcase the ways in which the expression of a negative disposition through the use of metaphor, derogatory expressions, sarcasm and stereotyping can be taken to indirectly communicate a discriminatory attitude that should ultimately be characterised as (soft) hate speech. In closing, we will present some examples which, at face value at least, could be interpreted as falling under the incitement to violence criterion, as a means of indirectly challenging the effectiveness with which local news portals monitor hate speech within their comments sections.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

While certainly illuminating in its own right, most traditional CDA research on discrimination has focused mainly on the expression of discriminatory (and predominantly racist and/or fascist) attitudes in either newspeak and public political discourse or (personal) experience narratives. Yet, the rapidly increasing prevalence of publicly available social media talk and other related forms of computer-mediated communication that can be used to express or counter discriminatory attitudes have recently enabled the proliferation of the relevant ideologically-charged talk beyond such more or less institutionalised settings, with various members of the general public commonly engaging in it too (cf. Erjavec and Kovačič 2012). In this respect, the present paper forms part of a developing body of literature which deals specifically with the ways in which ideologically-charged language use in the Web 2.0 can be seen to construct or perpetuate the underlying attitude of the general public towards particular minorities. This is a premise that follows directly from the fundamental CDA assumption (cf. Fairclough 1995; van Dijk 1991), that language use is a social process, which is ultimately conditioned by (non-linguistic) aspects of society and in itself conditions social relationships, especially with respect to power, too. This premise, in combination with the observation that posts made online in reaction to current affairs are typically spontaneous and abundant with intense emotional content and expression (cf. Yus 2011, Baider and Constantinou 2017a), has been shown to provide a fertile ground for the identification of the ways in which discriminatory attitudes are conceptualised by the general public (cf. Musolff 2017).

It was this rationale that led those partners carrying out research under the auspices of the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. project to focus the most significant part of its data analysis on online comments that

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this paper we will be using 'Cyprus' and 'Cypriots' to refer to the Republic of Cyprus and the inhabitants of the mainly Orthodox part of the island of Cyprus. The data has been restricted to news portals in Greek for Greece and in Greek and English for Cyprus.

were posted in reaction to articles in local news portals. In the context of Cyprus and Greece, the methodology used by the two teams that collected and annotated the data in the first place<sup>3</sup> has been outlined in detail in Assimakopoulos et al. (2017: Chapter 2). In brief, after identifying keywords related to migration (e.g. ‘migrant’, ‘refugee’, ‘foreigner’, etc.) and LGBTIQ issues (e.g. ‘gay’, ‘lesbian’, ‘trans’, etc.), the participating teams collected all local news stories including these keywords that were published online over two 3-month periods (April-June 2015 and December 2015-February 2016). After this initial step, which was facilitated by the use of the Europe Media Monitor web-crawler (<http://emm.newsbrief.eu/>), each partner’s original dataset was systematically narrowed down to allow for the manual collection of a sample of comments associated with each article that would in turn allow for a more nuanced annotation and further qualitative analysis. This resulted in the compilation of balanced<sup>4</sup> corpora of news portal user comments in reaction to news reports related to migration and LGBTIQ issues, one for each participating partner country of the C.O.N.T.A.C.T. consortium. Then, each team manually classified all collected comments in terms of polarity, flagging comments that were deemed as carrying a negative disposition towards the minorities under question, as well as comments that were imbued with a positive attitude towards them. Finally, the different discursive strategies used for the expression of the two identified stances were further teased apart, by taking note of not only the linguistic forms (e.g. derogatory terms, metaphors, etc.) identified on the surface of the relevant comments, but also the pragmatic functions (e.g. stereotyping, sarcasm, etc.) embedded within them.

Having briefly outlined the methodology used across the consortium, as well as the pitfalls that present themselves when the legal notion of hate speech enters the discussion of discriminatory discourse in the previous section, we are now ready to move on to a more thorough investigation of the data submitted by the Cypriot and Greek annotation teams. To this end, in the following section, we will show how the quantitative analysis of the polarity annotation results can provide some insight regarding the relevant discriminatory tendencies in Cyprus and Greece, while situating them in the socio-political context of the two countries.

### 3. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS: IDENTIFYING TRENDS

As can be seen in Table 1 below, the results of the annotation of the collected comments suggest a predominance of negative attitudes, when compared to positive ones, across the board. However, a closer look reveals an interesting contrast between the two national settings. In the case of Greece, a significantly higher proportion of negative comments was identified in the context of migration, both in relation to the corresponding data for Cyprus and the Greek data pertaining to the LGBTIQ corpus. However, in the Cypriot data, this pattern seems to be reversed, with homophobia/transphobia presenting itself as the main discriminatory attitude – and to a (marginally) higher degree than its equivalent in the Greek data.

Table 13 Results of comments polarity evaluation

Polarity evaluation	Migration corpus		LGBTIQ corpus	
	Cyprus	Greece	Cyprus	Greece
Negative	27.8%	<b>67.3%</b>	<b>48.4%</b>	<b>44.5%</b>
Positive	19.1%	11.5%	25.5%	28%
Neutral/irrelevant	<b>53.1%</b>	21.2%	26.1%	27.5%

In line with the Discourse-Historical Approach to CDA (cf. Reisigl 2018), we believe that the observed trends can be accounted for by considering the specific circumstances of the period in which this collected data was originally produced as well as the broader social and historical context of the two countries under question.

<sup>3</sup> Comments were collected and annotated by the University of Cyprus for the Cypriot data and by the NGO Human League for Human Rights (HLHR) for the Greek data. Please refer to the national websites on [reportinghate.eu](http://reportinghate.eu) for details.

<sup>4</sup> Each national corpus included comments amounting to 5,000-6,000 words per keyword over the designated 6-month period. Overall, the 8 keywords that returned the most articles in the domain of migration in the original search, alongside the 6 most prevailing ones in the LGBTIQ domain, were used to identify the articles whose comments would then be incorporated in the corpus.

Starting off with what appears to be a marked xenophobic attitude in Greece, it could be taken to follow from the fact that the country has been much more directly affected by the ongoing migration crisis than Cyprus. This, in conjunction with the current economic crisis that has plagued Greece over the past few years, seems to have generated the widely-held, albeit clearly misled, belief that the state cannot afford to – and thus should not – spend money on refugees (cf. Αγγελίδης 2017). Even though the Republic of Cyprus has not known an influx of refugees in this instance, the corresponding, but far less prominent negative sentiment towards migrants in the Cypriot context could also be situated socially and historically. For one, most of the news stories related to refugees and migrants were reproduced in the Cypriot media from Greek news portal and therefore reactions were influenced by the ways stories were presented in their original form. Then, Greek-Cypriots have also experienced the arrival of thousands of migrants from the East and into Greece, especially in relation to what happened in 1974 with the de facto split of the island<sup>5</sup>.

Turning to the stronger disapproval of the LGBTIQ community in the Cypriot comments, both the conservative traits which characterize the Cypriot society towards sexuality in particular (cf. Baider 2018; Kouta and Tolma 2008) and its strong religious affiliation to the Orthodox Church (Cyprus is the second most religious country in the EU; cf. Stavrou Karayianni 2012) could help account for the patterns observed in relation to both the Greek data and the Cypriot data on migration. After all, as Kouta and Tolma (2008: 30) observe, in Cyprus “attitudes and beliefs about sexuality reflect traditional collectivist values” with strong taboos influencing beliefs and “differences in gender roles in relation to sexuality [...] also prevailing” even among the youth. That said, a socio-historical perspective could also provide another explanation as to why homophobic attitudes are more prominent, even if marginally so, in the Cypriot rather than in the Greek data. This would have to do with the visibility of the LGBTIQ community in the two settings, and more specifically the gay pride parade, which was only organized in 2014 for the first time in Cyprus, and therefore right before the sample of data analysed was produced, whereas in Greece it has a much longer tradition, dating back to 2005. This hypothesis can be further corroborated by the evaluation of the relevant comments, according to which, articles containing the keyword “ΛΟΑΤ” (LGBT) and referring to organised LGBT communities appeared to trigger a much stronger hostility than any other keyword related to either homophobia/transphobia or xenophobia in the Cypriot context.

#### 4. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS: ATTRIBUTING IDEOLOGIES

Several studies in CDA have shown that the study of recurrent linguistic choices and specific discursive tactics can be particularly useful for understanding the strategies used to construct the in-groups and out-groups within a community (cf. Baker et al. 2008; Kopytowska 2015; Musolff 2017). Given our overall aim of showing how the indirect communication of discriminatory attitudes should also be taken into account in discussions of hate speech, we will now turn to the qualitative analysis of some representative examples from the two corpora, which reveal how Othering processes can be taken to lead to discrimination, and eventually to the marginalisation of the two minority groups in the two countries. More specifically, we will show how the negative dispositions towards the minorities at hand present themselves on the basis of the referential strategies used by the respective commenters as well as the exploitation of existing stereotypes. Adopting a CDA perspective, these processes lead to a reinforcement, in the general public, of conscious or subliminal fears related to the Other (in our case the migrant and the LGBTIQ communities), which in turn encourage the development of socio-cultural practices and interpersonal relations affecting minority groups on the basis of negative tropes.

Among the relevant referential strategies, metaphors have been singled out the most in studies focused on the representation of minorities, since “understanding the systematic nature of metaphor choices” allows us to also understand how “*entire belief systems are conceived and communicated*” (Charteris-Black 2005: 3, our italics; cf. also Musolff 2015; Baider 2017). That is because metaphors signal the underlying conceptual frame of their producer, i.e. the set of assumptions typically made in categorising members of a minority or any person belonging (or appearing as belonging) to that group, which in turn leads to the conceptualisation of metaphors as creating or confirming

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<sup>5</sup> In both the Greek and the Cypriot contexts, several negative comments had a religious undertone, so it seems that the differences between the (predominantly) Christian Orthodox faith of the in-group and the Muslim one in the out-group also plays an important role in this setting.

stereotypes. As the following examples show, metaphors were also widespread in our data, in both the xenophobic setting, where the influx of migrants and refugees is characterised as an *invasion* (examples 1 and 2), and the homophobic one, where the LGBTIQ community is thought to engage in *animal*, *abnormal* or *sick/sinful* behaviour (examples 3, 4 and 5 respectively).

1. *Είναι βλακεία οι επιχειρήσεις διάσωσης, επειδή η Ευρώπη επικυρώνει και ενισχύει την εισβολή που δέχεται από την υποσαχάρια Αφρική...*  
'These rescue missions are stupid, because through them Europe validates and reinforces its invasion by [people from] Sub-Saharan Africa.'  
(Proto Thema, Greece - 5 May 2015)
2. *Τι κρίμα! Δεν λυπάμαι, ούτε βέβαια χαίρομαι, αδιαφορώ, με νοιάζει περισσότερο να σταματήσει αυτή η εισβολή ασιατών στην πατρίδα μου.*  
'What a shame! I don't feel sorry, nor glad of course; I am just indifferent. What I am more concerned with is for this invasion of my homeland by Asians to stop.'  
(To Vima, Greece - 29 Jan 2016)
3. *Αυτα είναι τα καλά της βρομο-Ευρώπης ...τολαχιστω η Ρωσια και η Σερβία αντιστέκεται ακόμα στην παρακμή και πτώση του ανθρώπου στο επίπεδο του ζώου.*  
'This is the progress of filthy-Europe... At least Russia and Serbia still resist the decay and decadence of man to the level of an animal.'
4. *Την πουστοπαρέλαση τους μόνο εγώ την βλέπω ως διαφήμιση της ανωμαλίας και τρόπος να προσελκύσουν τους νέους*  
'Am I the only one who sees this faggot-parade as an advertisement of abnormality and a way to attract the youth?'  
(Sigmalive, Cyprus - 28 May 2015)
5. *Poustares ke lesbies arostia tis kinonias mono me fotia tha sothite o theos na sas kapsi!*  
Faggots and lesbians, you are the sickness of society. Only fire can save you, may God burn you!  
(Sigmalive, Cyprus - June 6 2015)

Having corroborated to some extent the widely documented relevance of metaphor as a vehicle for the indirect communication of discriminatory attitudes, we can now turn to see some further strategies that can be used to the same effect, as these can be identified in our data. On the basis of the discussion of the quantitative analysis above, and due to space restrictions, we will have to focus only on the presence of xenophobic attitudes in the Greek corpus of negative comments and homophobic ones in the Cypriot one, while only focusing on a few representative indirect strategies identified in the data analysis.

#### 4.1. Xenophobic attitudes in the Greek data

When it comes to the indirect communication of xenophobic attitudes in the Greek corpus, a discursive tactic that is widely used is that of blindly generalising across the refugee population, and thus enforcing certain experiences into stereotypes about it:

6. *Λυπαμαι αλλα εμεις τρεμουμε οταν περναμε απο εκει....κατι περιεργοι τυποι που απλωνονται καταμεσης και δεν τους ενδιαφερει...καθε καρυδιας κακοποιος .....κανατε την ελλαδα σκουπιδαριο....*  
'I'm sorry, but it's us who dread passing by there.... They are some strange fellows who stretch out in the middle of the street and don't care [about anything]. All sorts of criminals.... You've turned Greece into a junkyard...'  
(Proto Thema, Greece - 31 Dec 2015)
7. *ΑΠΟ ΟΠΟΥ ΠΕΡΝΑΝΕ ΚΑΝΟΥΝ ΚΑΤΑΣΤΡΟΦΕΣ ΑΦΗΝΟΥΝ ΒΡΩΜΑ ΚΑΙ ΔΥΣΟΔΙΑ.....*

‘WHEREVER THEY PASS BY, THEY BRING DESTRUCTION, THEY LEAVE FILTH AND STENCH....’

(*To Vima*, Greece - 11 Dec 2015)

While in (6) the commenter uses the explicit derogatory terms ‘*criminals*’ and ‘*junk*’ to refer to refugees, s/he also alludes to the feelings of insecurity that the presence of groups of refugees may bring to the locals, reinforcing the widely held fear among Greeks that refugees are typically dangerous (cf. Αγγελίδης 2017). The same applies to (7), where the commenter exclaims (in capital letters) that all refugees are not only dangerous, but also dirty and disease-ridden, echoing a belief that has often been vocalized by parents protesting the enrolment of asylum-seeking students to local schools for reasons of hygiene (cf. Παπαμαθαίου και Κλώντζα 2017).

Along similar lines, sarcasm is also often used not only for the enforcement but also the perpetuation of stereotypical beliefs among the Greeks regarding the same refugee groups. Consider the following examples:

8. Και πρώτη γλώσσα Αραβικά! Και Σαρία! Και ΙΣΙΣ! Και τζαμιά πολλά! Και τζιχαντιστές! Και ανατινάξεις! Και κομμένα χεράκια ποδαράκια! Επιτέλους προοδος!  
‘And Arabic to become first language! And the Sharia! And ISIS! And many mosques! And jihadists! And explosions! And mutilated hands and legs! Progress is finally here!’

(*Ta Nea*, Greece - 15 May 2015)

9. Γρήγορα παιδιά μη τους χάσουμε και τους πάρει η Ιταλία, τρεχάτε να προλάβουμε εμείς!  
‘Quick guys! Let’s not lose them to Italy. Hurry, so that we catch them!’

(*Proto Thema*, Greece - 7 June 2015)

At face value, the comment made in (8), which was made in response to an article reporting on a proposed bill in relation to second generation migrants, has a particularly positive undertone, as it mimics the talk of someone who is looking forward to some particularly exciting prospect; an impression supported by the consecutive use of short exclamatory phrases, each introduced by the coordinating conjunction ‘*and*’. However, the prediction that the new bill will have such destructive consequences as ‘*explosions*’ or ‘*mutilated hands and legs*’ clearly shows that the commenter says that ‘*progress is finally here*’ in a mocking manner, while at the same time reinforcing the stereotypical view in the West that Muslims, and especially Arabs, are inextricably linked to violence and terrorism (cf. Saifuddin and Matthes 2016). Similarly, the commenter who produced (9) mimics the talk of someone urging his/her peers to hurry up for something exciting. Given, however, that the article under which this comment was posted reported on a rescue mission in the Mediterranean to which Greece did not take part, (9) can be straightforwardly interpreted as sarcastic and building on the widely held assumption among Greeks that there are already far too many migrants in Greece (cf. Καρίδης 2016).

#### 4.2. Homophobic attitudes in the Cypriot data

Turning to homophobia/transphobia, as we saw above, almost half of the comments analysed in the Cypriot LGBTIQ corpus were deemed negative by the annotators; yet, there were very few cases of comments revealing a purely transphobic attitude, so we will focus our present discussion to examples that showcase a negative disposition towards minorities singled out in terms of their members’ sexual orientation, especially when this is homosexual.

In this vein, the main attitudes identified towards the homosexual community in Cyprus surrounded around contempt, disgust and anger. As the following examples showcase, these attitudes are correspondingly conveyed in this setting too through the usage of derogatory referentials (as in the case of ‘*faggot-parade*’ or ‘*faggots*’ in examples 4 and 5 above) and stereotyping with reference to: (i) effeminate behaviour which is threatening virility, i.e. the social order in Cyprus (example 9), (ii) disease which is a threat for society at large (example 10), and (iii) treason in the sense of befriending the political enemy who threatens the nation as such (example 11):

10. *Pou nastamatisete na kamnete pasarellan je na sas ten proklitiki tote ena paretisun je I parapanw to ksilo ospou thoroumen arseniko me tsenta en ksilies pou theli*

'You should stop doing your catwalk and being provocative. Then those who beat you up will stop doing so. Whenever we see a male with a handbag, he needs to be beaten.'  
(*Sigmalive*, Cyprus - 29 May 2015)

11. Πολλοί λένε ότι γεννιούνται έτσι κ δεν γίνεται να αλλάξουν, ο δολοφόνος γενιέται δολοφόνος; ο παιδόφιλος γενιέται παιδόφιλος; κ ο πουστής γενιέται πούστης; όχι αλλά στην πορεία γίνονται και οι 3 "διαφορετικότητες" χρήζουν ιατρικής και ψυχολογικής περίθαλψης. είναι και οι 3 ανωμαλίες της φύσης και της διαταραχής του εγκεφάλου τους

'Many people say that they are born this way and they cannot change. Is the killer born a killer? Is the paedophile born a paedophile? And is the faggot born a faggot? No, but all 3 "diversions" take place while growing up and they call for medical and psychological care. All 3 are abnormalities of nature and disorders of their brain.'

(*Sigmalive*, Cyprus - 29 May 2015)

12. Δεν γνωρίζετε τι συμβαίνει κάποιοι. Η λεγομένη ΛΟΑΤ κοινότητα είναι πρωτοπόρος της λεγομένης επαναπροσεγγίσης με τους Τ/Κ και τους Τούρκους

'Some of you don't know what is going on. The so-called LGBT community is a frontrunner in the so-called rapprochement with the Turkish Cypriots and the Turks.'

(*Sigmalive*, Cyprus - 6 June 2015)

In (10), the stereotype of the effeminate gay man allows the commenter to justify violence against gay men on the grounds of gender expression. In this way, this comment can be taken to enforce masculine hegemonic values and behaviours, as these are understood under the qualities of virility. In (11), the commenter does not only directly associate homosexuality with paedophilia in a pernicious parallelism expressed through the use of symmetric linguistic structures ('*is the x born an x*'), but goes so far as to extend the link that is often alluded to in anti-gay discourse, so that it also includes murderous dispositions. In this way, after downplaying the scientifically established fact that homosexuality is not a choice that can just be changed, s/he bunches together all three groups into an amalgam of nature's abnormalities that should be medically treated as mental disorders. Finally, in (12) the use of the adjective '*so-called*' to qualify the LGBT community questions the existence of this community and, by extension, its rights. In addition, the use of this adjective can also be seen as an allusion to the prefix '*pseudo-*', which, in the Cypriot context, is politically-charged, as the northern, occupied part of the island is referred to as fake, i.e. a '*pseudo-state*', in all official texts, as well as everyday conversations. This, alongside the direct association, in this comment, of the LGBT community with the movement that advocates the reconciliation of both parts of the island could be seen as carrying the cognitive implication that LGBT individuals are the enemy within the nation, and are thus traitors.

## 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite being a term that was originally meant to be used in legal contexts, hate speech is increasingly being perceived as a complex and contested social construct, which is nonetheless notoriously difficult to uniformly define. In this paper, through an analysis of online comments in reaction to news articles related to the migrant and LGBTIQ communities in Cyprus and Greece, we have shown that the relevant speech can go beyond the direct incitement to violence and discrimination. An array of stereotyping and stigmatisation processes may also have comparative consequences, since by spreading contempt and disgust in relation to a particular minority it effectively encourages, or at least welcomes, its potential elimination from society.

That being said, and even though the main aim of this paper was to showcase how discriminatory attitudes can be effectively communicated indirectly, there were still some cases, both in the Cypriot (see example 9 above) and the Greek contexts, albeit predominantly in the latter, which could be interpreted as directly fulfilling the incitement to violence criterion to varying degrees. Without officially committing to such an interpretation ourselves, we will let you, the reader, draw your own conclusions on the basis of the following examples:

13. Θα μας κουβαληθούν κι εδώ. Αφήστε τους να σκυλοπνιγούνε....

They [migrants] will be shlepped here too. Let them drown like dogs....

(Proto Thema, Greece - 7 June 2015)

14. Εκτέλεση με σάπια ένεση. Ξυπνήστε μην δέχεστε άλλο την προπαγάνδα για δήθεν πρόσφυγες!!! Αντίδραση παντού να σωθεί η χώρα  
Execute them with a rotten injection. Wake up, don't accept the propaganda about supposed migrants anymore!!! Let's all react everywhere to save the country'  
(newsbeast.gr, Greece - 10 Feb 2016)

15. Εκτέλεση στον τοίχο της Καισαριανής όλων των λαθροχολεριασμένων και κυρίως των βρωμοπόδαρων αριστερών πιθηκίων, που τους υπερασπίζονται!  
Put all them illegal, cholera-ridden [migrants] and, above all, all them stinky-feet left-wing monkeys that defend them against the wall at Kaisariani, and execute them!  
(Proto Thema, Greece - 7 Jan 2016)

Again, situating these comments in the socio-political context in which they were produced, one could potentially identify a reason why the Greek dataset had many more such comments than the Cypriot one. Looking at the discourse and acts of the far-right political parties in the two countries, it is evident that both the talk and behaviour adopted by ELAM, the Cypriot far-right political party, is much milder than those of their Greek counterpart, Golden Dawn (cf. Baider and Constantinou 2017b). However, this constitutes an altogether different research project; one that would certainly be worthwhile pursuing in the future.

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